

DRAFT

Cal/EPA Environmental Justice Action Plan

DTSC West Oakland Pilot Project Update

May 31, 2007

- I. Lead Cal/EPA Board, Department or Office (BDO):** Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC)
- II. Project Area:** The community of West Oakland bounded by the 580, 880, and 980 freeways.
- Area Demographics:** The community of West Oakland is 66% African American, 1% American Indian and Alaska Native, 7% Asian, 16% Latino (of any race), and 11% Caucasian. The mean household income is approximately \$35,000 with 40% of the population living below the poverty level.
- III. Background:** The community of West Oakland requested that various local, state and federal agencies, who are involved in construction or waste cleanup activities, plan and implement their work collaboratively with the community to minimize or eliminate any future health or environmental impacts.
- IV. Project Start Date:** May 2005
- Project Goals & Objectives:** The overarching goal of the Project is to evaluate the effectiveness of a “government-to-community and community-to-government” forum which will facilitate information sharing and community involvement regarding cleanup and redevelopment projects in West Oakland, taking particular note of projects that impact children’s health.

In this context, the objectives of the project are the following:

1. Work in partnership with the West Oakland community to enhance the community’s role in local, state and federal decision making regarding site-specific environmental cleanup activities and the redevelopment process.
2. Focus on projects related to Brownfields and children’s health.
3. Build community capacity through sharing information, educational tools, and resources.
4. Prioritize Brownfield sites according to community interest and concerns. Evaluate the prioritized sites in consideration of the overall goals and needs of the West Oakland community.
5. Work to meet overall revitalization timelines so that Brownfield sites properties can be returned to productive use for the community.
6. Utilize the expertise and knowledge from other Cal/EPA Boards, Departments, and Office (BDOs) when necessary to address exposures, public health, or environmental effects from the combined emissions and discharges within the West Oakland community.

7. Consider impacts to sensitive populations and socio-economic factors where education, outreach, and community involvement are concerned.

V. Project Status:

a. West Oakland Local Advisory Group (WOLAG):

In March 2005, DTSC collaborated with the Environmental Indicators Project (EIP) of Oakland and the United States Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA) to sign an agreement to form the West Oakland Local Advisory Group (WOLAG). In October 2005, after several months of planning, DTSC, US EPA, and EIP conducted public outreach and education to the community, including Oakland area leaders, environmental groups and community representatives, to publicize the Project and recruit membership and participation into the WOLAG.

On November 7, 2005, DTSC held the first public WOLAG meeting with 25 participants in attendance. Information distributed at the meeting included goals of the WOLAG, principles of the partnership and commitment from community members to participate, and a description of a Brownfield.

The WOLAG meets quarterly. DTSC held a WOLAG meeting on January 19, 2006, and May 18, 2006, with approximately 25 participants in attendance.

The WOLAG meetings have focused on the following issues:

1. Dissemination of education and informational materials the community may utilize to encourage more participation in the environmental cleanup and redevelopment processes.
2. Updates from DTSC and other local, state, and federal agencies regarding their clean up of properties in the West Oakland area.
3. Updates from the City of Oakland on properties that are being considered for redevelopment in the West Oakland area.
4. Updates from the WOLAG pertinent to the activities that are being considered and developed.

b. WOLAG Criteria/Steering Committee

At the January 2006, WOLAG meeting, a Criteria Committee was formed within the WOLAG to educate and lead the WOLAG in the Brownfields discovery process. The Criteria Committee consists of 12 WOLAG members representing DTSC, the City of Oakland's Economic and Development Agency and Fire Department, the EIP, the West Oakland Toxic Reduction Collaborative, the San Francisco Regional Water Quality Control Board, and includes a local business owner, and two community residents.

The Criteria Committee goals include the following:

1. Develop criteria to evaluate sites for cleanup.
2. Develop tools to help the community identify Brownfields in their neighborhood and participate in the redevelopment process.
3. Provide feedback to DTSC about the effectiveness of local and state public participation.
4. Encourage membership and participation in the WOLAG.

The Criteria Committee meets once a month and reports to the WOLAG. In January 2007, the Criteria Committee changed its name to the WOLAG Steering Committee.

c. Brownfields Discovery Road Map

The WOLAG Steering Committee focused its attention on creating a tool, called the Brownfields Discovery Road Map, to identify Brownfield sites in the West Oakland area for community use. The idea came from an experience of two community members who had attempted to work with the City of Oakland regarding a West Oakland property scheduled for redevelopment. The community members recalled a gas station existing on the proposed redevelopment site in the 1950s and were concerned that the historical use of the property had not been considered in the redevelopment plan. The community members did not know who they could talk to about this concern at the time. Now, these community members are even more committed in their participation in the WOLAG and Steering Committee in developing tools to help interested community members participate in the redevelopment process because of this experience.

DTSC took the lead in helping the WOLAG Steering Committee develop the information needed for the Brownfields Discovery Road Map. The WOLAG decided that a systematic educational supplement document (titled the Step-by-Step Supplement) was needed to describe in detail each step of the Brownfields Discovery Road Map. In January 2007, DTSC reformatted the Brownfields Discovery Road Map and the Step-by-Step Supplement into a brochure form and created an educational information folder to distribute to the West Oakland community. DTSC is currently in the process of establishing a contract to reproduce this information.

d. WOLAG Education and Outreach Specialist

In January 2007, DTSC began initiating a contract with the Environmental Indicators Project (EIP) to hire an Education and Outreach Specialist for the WOLAG. The contract was signed April 10, 2007 for the total amount of \$25,000. The DTSC Education and Outreach Specialist will work 20 hours per month with the WOLAG and Steering Committee.

The DTSC Education and Outreach Specialist will perform the following specific tasks:

- Provide information to the West Oakland residents about the goals of the WOLAG through presentations at community meetings and written materials.
- Educate the West Oakland community in identifying Brownfields and participating in the environmental cleanup and redevelopment processes.
- Work with local community based organizations, the City of Oakland, and other local, state and federal agencies to encourage community participation in cleanup and redevelopment activities.
- Work cooperatively with EIP to facilitate the goals and objectives of the WOLAG.
- Prepare and distribute outreach and educational materials that promote the goals and objectives of the WOLAG.
- Provide monthly and quarterly reports to the WOLAG.

e. Upcoming Activities:

- Identify one or two active Brownfields in the West Oakland area with community interest.
- Educate the community leaders in the areas of interest so they may participate in the decision making process.
- Complete the Brownfields Discovery Road Map brochure for use as an educational tool for the community.
- Develop a redevelopment time line brochure to help the community understand the concurrent steps that take place in the cleanup and redevelopment processes.
- Create a forum with local, state, and federal agencies involved with cleanup and redevelopment to meet with members of the WOLAG, West Oakland Toxic Reduction Collaborative (WOTRC) and the EIP to talk about the cleanup and redevelopment process and how the community may be more timely informed about decisions and activities that are about to take place.